

1 Introduction and Overview

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While revision is consistently included as a topic in any writing handbook or rhetoric, it doesn't have a well-developed history of theorizing and study. A search for works on revision turns up personal discussions of revision practices embedded in writers' memoirs and accounts of their craft; advice and prescriptions for students about revision; some scholarly studies of how particular groups, mainly young people, approach revising; style books in which revision is cast mainly at the level of the sentence and the word; and a few rhetoric and composition works by scholars like Peter Elbow and Donald Murray, who explore revision extensively. Writing teachers have much to gain from investigating all these various trails, but need as well a synthesis of current theory and practice, which this book provides.

Revision's importance seems so self-evident that it takes a minute to marshal support for the premise. Students ought to come out of writing classes able to write under the new conditions of other college classes or graduate school, employment, and community. If students can revise, it means they can measure their writing against the needs of an audience, a purpose, a set of disciplinary constraints, and expectations. Society as a whole deserves carefully-wrought, precise prose, not just pleasing to read but ethically written, to clarify issues, decisions, and tasks like filling in income tax forms.

Teachers ought to be able to present revision not just as the way to an "A" grade but as the way to individual satisfaction and social usefulness. These functional understandings of revision stand alongside ethical and aesthetic ones. Writers, whether student or professional, may continue to wrestle until a meaning is fully explored, developed and nuanced; they ask themselves "how true is this writing?" Or writers may continue to work until their aesthetic responses to the cadence

es and patterns of language are more nearly satisfied. Understanding successful revision might result from exploring the role of creativity in re-imagining a document with a new visual image or architectural design; from rhetorical analysis; from studying the role of partnerships and mentoring, both in a classroom and outside.

In general, mature, experienced writers are better at revising than younger people. In *Revision Revisited*, Alice S. Horning explores the extensive repertoire of revising practices that professional writers use. Student writers occasionally revise extensively too, but are more likely to stick to surface correction and small changes. If we study the differing practices of students and professionals, teachers can note, first, that some aspects of revising are lifelong skills, the result of self-knowledge, ambition rooted in a career and a discipline, and even the rewards of a salary or a significant entry on a resume. We include here in various chapters studies related to the maturity of our students as writers, the roles of procrastination and writers' blocks at the revision as well as the starting stage: psychology's contribution to our grasp of revision. It is clear that revision touches every part of the writing process, so we explore it not only as a starting point but also as woven into all aspects of writing, a first chief goal of this collection. Our second major objective here is to survey new research on writing processes and strategies that yields insights into the nature of revision. Current findings on creativity, on the impact of technology and on other aspects of writing enhance our understanding of writing and revising.

A pedagogy that not only supports revision but shows how it might be done is central. Mina Shaughnessy and David Bartholomae, among others, point out that in creating text, the students we call "basic writers" encounter confusing messages and impulses as they attend to their own ideas along with what they know of the academy's rules and expectations. Not just basic writers but all learning writers must attempt to reconcile personal goals and institutional expectations, and the revision process is fraught with these conflicts. A first step in teaching document-level revision may be to acknowledge these issues.

A further step includes assessing teaching and classroom practices for their support or their undermining of revision. For example, heavy grammar and style comments on a student's early draft may carry the message that the surface matters most. Trained to find mistakes, students sometimes notice a symptom of a problem, like an obtrusive repetition of a word, but rather than deal with the underlying coher-

ence and sequence-of-ideas problem, they replace the offending word with a synonym here and there. If a passage seems disconnected, rather than seek out the idea-basis of the connection, they'll add in a transition word like *moreover* or *however*. Untrained peer reviewers in a classroom peer review session may produce impressionistic and vague responses on whether a topic *per se* is interesting and use badly-understood and vaguely conceived terms of criticism (as in "does the paper flow?").

The challenge of teaching revision is to do it with appropriate expectations and goals. Real revising is more a habit of mind, an openness to further consideration, a willingness to keep at it. And revision for students shouldn't result in blandness and flattening of the students' language nor the imposition of teachers' phrases and insights. Our hope for students is that they understand the conventions of the writing situations they find themselves in, while at the same time maintaining the freedom to change the situation in response to principle or passion. Following is a brief overview and summary of the chapters of the text.

In Chapter 2 on "Distinctions and Definitions," Catherine Haar explores what "revision" currently means, and who subscribes to the meaning given. In the growth and development of composition studies, have assumptions about revision changed suddenly or gradually? Are there competing meanings? To answer these questions, a first step in synthesizing work on revision includes charting the appearances, changes in, and assumptions about the term "revision." Metaphors for revision signal both understandings and misunderstandings. Students sometimes want to "polish up" a paper, restricting what they do to the surface features (like waxing the car but forgetting the tune-up, body work, or need for trade-in). Students assert they're "fixing" their essay, thus repairing what's broken.

Teachers sometimes read a "diagnostic" essay, suggesting illness to be cured. Metaphors of development liken revision to organic things which grow, while metaphors of readiness link writing to other performances like musical concerts or presentations of plays or poetry. Distinctions between revising—holistic, macro or discourse-level considerations—and editing—at the sentence and word level—have their uses but limitations as well (since discourse attains coherence and connectedness as it moves through a sequence of sentences).

In her review of the recent literature, Anne Becker reviews major books and other research reports published within the last five years, along with the relevant background from earlier theoretical proposals. This section summarizes the major models of revision processes that have been proposed recently. In addition, new programs and classroom applications are included. This chapter builds on the detailed review of the literature in Horning's *Revision Revisited*, which reviews all of the major work on revising published from 1975 to 2000.

Turning to basic writers, in the fourth chapter Alice Horning and Jeanie Robertson examine the diverse approaches to composing and revising found in this group of students, using the framework of the awarenesses and skills set up in *Revision Revisited*. Beginning with a definition of the wide range of types of writing students who are categorized as basic writers, the exploration compares and contrasts their strategies to those of professional writers. Basic writers' diversity creates a complex environment for teaching and learning revising. This chapter studies what happens and what doesn't happen when basic writers take beginning drafts, often viewed by the writer as "finished" or "done," and move to revisions that enhance meaningful communication. The chapter explores reasons for these perceptions and practices. Revision, particularly for basic writers, is not a "one size fits all" process. This part of the book offers ways instructors and student writers can more clearly understand and utilize the revision process on an individual, personalized level.

The ESL student population presents its own challenges with regard to revision, as discussed by Kasia Kietlinska, who was herself a student of English as a second language. Her discussion in the fifth chapter examines the common features of ESL writing and specific needs of ESL students in approaching the revision process. Revision work for non-native speakers of English is complicated by both the linguistic challenges of writing in a second language and the underlying cultural assumptions about text, the presentation of ideas and the larger character of writing. Strategies for revision for students and for the teaching of revision for teachers are both reviewed.

Robert Lamphear's discussion of "What's in a Textbook?" in Chapter 6 focuses on the approaches taken by the major English handbooks currently in publication. The review of textbook approaches will include an understanding of the trends and theories displayed in these texts. In addition, the chapter will offer a brief analysis of the effective-

ness of techniques and exercises in each text. The discussion will demonstrate how each textbook attempts to aid students with the revision process. This chapter also includes a review of several books that focus exclusively on revision practices intended for student writers, such as Donald Murray's classic *The Craft of Revision*.

Just as revision touches every part of the writing process, so, too, does the impact of the computer affect every aspect of revision. In "Revising with Word Processing/Technology/ Document Design" Douglas Eyman and Colleen Reilly show how the development of word processing and other computer-based technologies has changed the nature of writing and the writing process. In Chapter 7, the impact of technology on revision processes and strategies is examined. The features of typical word processing programs that facilitate revision are discussed, along with ways in which technology can sometimes interfere with substantive revision in writing, such as with grammar-checking programs that lead writers astray. Power Point, Web pages and document design strategies and their impact on revising are discussed with detailed examples.

"Professional Writers and Revision" summarizes the research and findings in *Revision Revisited*. For that project, the revision processes of nine professional writers were studied through interviews on their writing habits and revision practices, through think-aloud protocols, and through their reviews of the descriptions of their work. The case studies show that professional writers use three kinds of awareness of themselves as writers and four kinds of skills to revise successfully. Detailed examples of the work of two of the contributors to this volume provide some new convincing data. In general, teachers of writing spend plenty of time building the skills that the experts have, but not nearly enough time helping student writers develop an awareness of themselves as writers.

Turning to creative writing, in the ninth chapter "Creativity and Revision," David Stephen Calonne takes up the process of revision and its role in the psychology of creativity, examining insights from literary theory, psychological investigations, and depth psychology. The chapter reviews interviews and personal accounts of such writers as Vladimir Nabokov, Robert Graves, Aldous Huxley, Henry Miller, William Faulkner, and Jorge Luis Borges. The chapter concludes by considering the role of revision in "creative" work and seeks to deter-

mine whether there is any fundamental difference between “literary” revision and the revising process for university composition students.

The tenth chapter on current views reviews the literature to discover what preferred approaches, methods, and activities are being used to help students revise their writing. Carol Trupiano focuses on three areas: teachers, peers, and tutors. Within each of these areas, the chapter explores a variety of questions. For example, how helpful are written comments on student papers, student conferences, and the use of portfolios? What types of training and/or tools do students need in order to participate in peer reviews? What are the different tutoring programs (writing centers, online tutoring, others), what are their strengths, and how can they become part of a writing assignment? Trupiano then discusses how students can effectively use what they have learned from feedback as they revise their writing. It includes practical steps that teachers can use to help students go through the necessary process of reflection and understanding. For example, after a peer review session a student might write a response discussing what issues were addressed during the session, what changes he or she decided to implement, and what impact these changes had on the revised paper. This chapter includes several sample activities and step-by-step instructions illustrating the various methods and approaches.

The final portion of the book, “Practical Guidelines for Writers and Teachers,” includes Cathleen Breidenbach’s ideas about lessons and assignments to help students understand their options as writers and to practice deep revision with emphasis on rhetorical strategies. Chapter 11 dispels fallacies of the “natural writer” and clarifies the difference between deep revision and editing. “Practical Guidelines” challenges the perception that revision, by its nature, is tedious drudgery and argues instead for a creative approach to revision as a discovery process. In a lighthearted discussion, the chapter advises teachers to break old habits of grading and to expand their comments on papers to include a broader range of rhetorical issues and options. It justifies building more time into the revision process. The proposed divide and conquer strategy breaks down the complicated, recursive process of revision into four areas of consideration to help students realize and experiment with their choices as writers. The discussion includes definitions and suggested lessons and assignments to focus on content (argument, logic, narrative, organization), rhetorical decisions that writers make (purpose, genre, audience, tone, and point of view), style (with advice

about how to teach “writing by ear”), and lastly mechanics. Focusing on the choices writers make helps students break down and clarify the complicated process of composition and appreciate the way multiple threads entwine as a piece of writing come to life

The book closes with a glossary and annotated bibliographic essay, both assembled by Cathy McQueen with help from all the contributors. The bibliographic essay include important and generative works in the area, as well as introductory material, controversial books and articles, useful materials, exercises and related work.

All the writers who contributed to this project have come away from it with a deep awareness of how complex and integral the revision process is to the creation of successful written texts. Their work presents some of the new research on writing that helps explain how revision functions in the writing process. The preparation of the chapters showed all the contributors just how revision bears on all parts of writing, from inspiration to final draft, a continuous thread that winds through all parts of the book. Readers can follow this thread in all of the areas explored here and will ultimately find that it binds the book together into the unified fabric of teaching and learning effective writing through revising.